

CONNECT NEW MEXICO COUNCIL MEETING

Hybrid Meeting

In-Person: State Capitol Bldg., Room 311
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87501

Thursday, May 15, 2025, 1:30 – 3:30 PM

1. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting of the Connect New Mexico Council was called to order by Shawna Rosales, at 1:30 pm, on Thursday, May 15, 2025, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ms. Rosales welcomed everyone to the meeting.

While awaiting members for a quorum Ms. Rosales turned the meeting over to Mr. Clack, who introduced Cabinet Secretary Manny Barreras as the current Acting Director for OBAE, until a new director can be selected and appointed by the Governor's Office. He noted that this position is currently open and posted on the Governor's website and encouraged anyone interested to apply for this position. He added that Secretary Barreras could not attend today's meeting due to a conflict in his schedule and had asked Mr. Clack to convey his regrets to the Council. Mr. Clack stated that DoIT is working closely with OBAE, since the Secretary is filling both roles, making sure that all of the OBAE grant programs and operations continue with minimal to no interruptions. Mr. Clack asked if there were any question regarding this. There were none.

Mr. Eric Rodgers thanked the Council and Secretary Barreras for the opportunity to speak. He introduced new OBAE team members; Maria Varela, joining as an accountant and auditor III on the Administrative Services Division side and Andy Exell, program coordinator for ARPA. There will be others introduced at a later time.

Mr. Rodgers gave a brief update on the state funding, as well as some of the federal programs. Currently the Connect New Mexico Fund is comprised of 22 total awards representing approximately \$58 million of awards; those projects are underway and are being funded, these will eventually cover approximately 29,000 locations throughout New Mexico. This includes 14 fiber projects, representing almost 800 miles of fiber and eight fixed wireless projects, covering almost 5,000 square miles. In terms of project status, 18 projects have launched, two are in active planning, 12 are in final design and permitting, and four in construction which have received reimbursement of approximately \$3.9 million.

Mr. Rodgers also reviewed GWEP (Grant writing, Engineering and Planning) program, which he personally oversees. The concept for this is to give tribes, local governments and rural co-ops the chance to apply for a \$100K award to perform one of these functions, grant writing, engineering, planning, or any combination of these. There has been \$2.75 million awarded with \$2.25 million remaining to be awarded. This is a revolving fund with application still open. He encouraged any interested party(ies) to apply. Within the awards already funded there have been 13 to local governments (cities/municipalities), 12 tribal awards and 3 to rural co-ops.

Mr. Rodgers offered to answer any questions as they might arise during his review.

Mr. Rodgers described the Student Connect Program, which is part of the Connect New Mexico Fund, which offers financial assistance to fund projects that help connect unserved and underserved public school students within rural communities. There have been 11 projects awarded in this program to date, representing slightly less than \$22 million, with approximately \$3 million remaining to award in this fund. Those eligible to apply for these funds are internet

service providers with support from their local school district, public schools and school districts, as well as tribal governments.

Mr. Rodgers again noted that all of the grant programs described are part of the Connect New Mexico Fund, and these have recently been extended to June 30, 2026, as part of HB2, recently passed by the Legislature, with the original deadline for the program of June 30, 2025, having now been extended an additional year. He stated that amendments are currently being sent out by the legal team reflecting this date change.

With respect to federal awards Mr. Rodgers noted there has been a recent change in digital equity within the industry, which affects the Pinon Grant, and on May 9th the Office of Broadband received an official letter from the U.S. Department of Commerce which states it is ceasing those funds. At this time the Office of Broadband is working with the Governor's Office and the office of the State Attorney General to determine how to respond to this federal notice of cessation of these funds. The process of scoring the 39 applications for these funds is continuing in preparation to proceed appropriately once direction is received from the Governor's Office.

Regarding BEAD Mr. Rodgers reported that NTIA is expected to release new guidance on this program in June or July, and the Final Proposal deadline has been extended by 90 days, pushing the deadline out to August. OBAE has not received any official direction from NTIA to stop working so the office is proceeding as normal, moving ahead with the sub-grantee selection process. OBAE is currently in the negotiation and curing phase of Round 1 applications, with 66 applications received, representing 74% of the eligible locations which were part of Round 1. The prequalification process for Round 2 has recently been opened, which will allow additional applicants to pre-qualify for the second round, which will occur later this summer.

Mr. Enjady asked what the dollar amounts were for the first round applicants with respect to the \$675 million allocated.

Mr. Rodgers deferred answering this to Andrew Wilder, the program coordinator, as he did not know the dollar amount totals.

Mr. Wilder responded that the total grant request from the first round of applications was \$719 million, which did include one proposal from an alternative technology provider, which was not eligible to apply in Round 1, so when this is removed, the total grant request was in the mid-\$500 million range. He will check the exact amount and report.

Mr. Enjady asked for clarification that the one ineligible applicant pushed the grant requested amount over the allocated amount.

Mr. Wilder replied that this was correct.

Mr. Enjady asked if this ineligible application was being rejected.

Mr. Wilder stated that the alternative technology applicant will be given an opportunity to resubmit their application in Round 2, since alternative technology proposals were not eligible in Round 1. Mr. Wilder stated that the remaining applications have been scored, will be cured and negotiated, coming to preliminary awards, and then there will be a Round 2 application process for any remaining locations which were not included previously. Mr. Wilder stated he did expect there to be additional funding remaining for this Round 2.

With respect to the changes coming from NTIA and really not knowing what these will be Mr. Enjady asked if applicants will have additional time to comply with additional demands or changes and how this will be administered.

Mr. Wilder replied that this is a good question and the office is definitely holding some ambiguity at present, trying to keep things moving with the program, at the same time knowing there may be a significant amount of change in program requirements in a matter of weeks. He stated that the new guidance will be evaluated once it is released and the office will make sure all applicants and stakeholders will have adequate time to comply, depending on what the changes entail. This could include an extension or other approaches.

Mr. Enjady asked if applicants could still opt out at that time and whether grant acceptance had been established.

Mr. Wilder responded that this is correct, however, he would be very disappointed if applicants did decide to opt out, but the office would of course respect their decision if they so choose.

Mr. Enjady noted that he is only asking these questions because of the uncertainty of the demands the new criteria might impose on applicants.

Mr. Wilder expressed his understanding and again stated that the office will evaluate the new guidance once it is released and determine the best course of action, being mindful of the impacts to the applicants and other stakeholders.

Mr. Enjady thanked Mr. Wilder.

Ms. Waller asked for clarification of the BEAD applications totaling \$719 million, with exclusion of the one alternative technology application, which brought the total ask for the first round of BEAD to the mid-\$500 million range.

Mr. Wilder responded that this is correct as this was a very large application. He is working on getting the exact numbers now to report to the meeting.

Ms. Waller thanked him.

Mr. Rodgers added that he believed the negotiation phase currently under way may impact these dollar amounts, and asked Mr. Wilder for confirmation of this, and that this creates a bit of a "moving target".

Mr. Wilder confirmed Mr. Rodgers assessment. (OBAE update continued below under Item 5)

At this point Ms. Rosales conducted the Roll Call for Quorum, which was confirmed, and proceed with Approval of the Agenda and Minutes.

Members Present-

Jason Clack

Leonard Manzanares

Eli Guinee

Joseph Navarette

Launa Waller

Steve Grey

Jim Ruybal

Godfrey Enjady

Members Absent-

Luis Reyes
Nora Sackett
Mona Martinez

Katherine Crociata
Isaac Bush

Others Present

Renee Narvaiz, IT, Public Information Manager

Eric Rodgers (GWEP Coordinator)

Jacqueline Lovato, Andrew Wilder, Corey Nelson, Kelly O'Neill, Katherine Irvin, Matejka Santillanes, Sandeep Taxali, Mitch Hibbard, Bo Ford, James Meyers, Monica [REDACTED], Jerry Smith, Daniel Vigil, Neala Krueger

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda & Minutes

MOTION Ms. Rosales called for a motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. Guinnee/Mr. Enjady so moved, seconded by Mr. Clack. There being no opposition the Agenda was approved.

MOTION: Ms. Rosales called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2025 meeting. Mr. Clack so moved, seconded by Mr. Guinnee. There being no opposition the minutes were approved.

3. Chair Updates/Comments – Omitted.

4. Working Group Updates - Digital Equity Working Group – Eli Guinnee

Mr. Guinnee stated that the group continues to meet and Mr. Ford is doing an excellent job bringing the group together. He placed a link in the Chat for the working group sign-up form for anyone interested in joining. He expressed that the group is of course disappointed in the loss of the federal funding and much of the group's work in the last few months has been working toward this, and they are hoping for restoration of this funding. He then asked Mr. Ford, the Chair of this Working Group, to continue the update.

Mr. Ford thanked the Council for the opportunity to present this update. He noted that Ms. Nicolau has transitioned from her role as Co-Chair a couple of months previously; however, the group has been working steadily since then. He stated that the group did not meet in April due to the schedule conflict with the New Mexico Energy Policy Symposium, with many members of the working group attending that event. He reported that the group has a great agenda for their next meeting and he is looking forward to reconnecting with everyone. He added that the group has changed their meeting frequency from bi-weekly to monthly and there has been good attendance since that transition.

Regarding the Pinon Grant, Mr. Ford reported that there were approximately 39 applications submitted.

Mr. Ford reported that the Tribal Broadband Bootcamp took place last month at Jemez Pueblo, with several working group members in attendance. This bootcamp covered how to run a network including the labor component as well as the back-end components.

He also noted the ARPA "Train the Trainer" training program which several of the working group members have participated in, with the pilot program having been used in the City of Albuquerque, and the good success noted with this program.

Mr. Ford ended his update report at this point, see note under Item 7, Adjournment, below.

5. Updates from OBAE – Eric Rodgers (continued from above)

Mr. Rodgers continued his report with information regarding ARPA, as previously mentioned, which are ongoing projects, with the first of these 19 projects getting ready to close out, which will be a great accomplishment as this network is certified to be up and running, with completion of the process in terms of their funding, etc. He noted that this program runs through December 31, 2026, so completion of this first project is a great achievement.

Mr. Rodgers reported on the Connectivity to Declared Disaster Areas program, which is a portion of ARPA, where assistance grants are awarded to help rebuild connectivity in disaster areas declared by the Governor's Office. This program is currently in the scoring phase and will then be cured, and will help reconnect certain broadband locations which have been impacted by fire and flood. This is a more recent program within the Office of Broadband.

Mr. Enjady noted that he did attempt to apply for this, but was not allowed to do so because the restoration work had already been done. Mr. Rodgers gave an explanation of the process involved that resulted in rejection of Mr. Enjady's application. Mr. Enjady stated in this situation services were restored emergently relevant to the function of local government and his application was an effort to cover shortfalls not covered by insurance or FEMA. Mr. Rodgers expressed his understanding of the scenario.

Mr. Rodgers noted that the Office of Broadband is also now responsible for the Statewide Education Network, led by Mr. Ovidiu Viorica, with the passage of SB401. He stated that previously the funding for this network was administered through PSFA, so the funding now also resides with the Office of Broadband. This program helps establish connectivity to K-12 institutions at various locations statewide and the goal is to have every school connected through the program by the end of 2027. The passage of SB401 has simplified administration of this program.

Mr. Rodgers stated that this concludes his report and asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Ms. Rosales then asked Mr. Guinnee to give the update as noted in Item 4.

6. Public Comment –
Omitted.

7. Adjournment – Shawna Rosales

At the end of Item 4 above Ms. Rosales advised Mr. Ford that the time limit for the Zoom meeting was approaching and she needed to ask the Chair if she had any additional comments. Ms. Rosales reported that the Chair had no further comments.

Ms. Rosales encouraged audience participants with questions to reach out via the connect.nm.gov.us email address or they can call the office at (505) 690-2128.

MOTION: Ms. Rosales called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Guinnee so moved, seconded by Mr. Clack. There being no opposition and no further business before the Council the meeting was adjourned at [REDACTED] p.m.